

The Ballarat Naturalist

June 2016



Birding in Papua New Guinea

Presented by Graham Dent

Graham worked as a patrol officer in PNG during the 1960s and 1970s. During this time he saw many areas of PNG and developed an interest in the birds and people of PNG.



Lesser Bird of Paradise flaunts his flank plumes to attract females

Photo: Tim Laman

Forty years ago some of the highlands people were still cannibals. Mining and forestry has destroyed large areas of forest often filling streams with eroded soils.

He showed images of the high altitude mountains, offshore islands and other habitats. There are 740 species of birds in PNG and Graham showed a good selection of these. Seeing the birds and obtaining clear photographs is often difficult in the dense habitat. Graham also played recordings of the calls which are often useful for identification. Coloured feathers are prized possessions worn at ceremonial events and then stored carefully for the next occasion.

Graham also displayed field guides showing the improvements in illustrations and reclassification (due to DNA analysis). over the past 50 years

We thank Graham for his interesting and beautifully illustrated talk on the geography, social history and birds of PNG.

John Gregurke

La Gerche Trail Excursion

Leader— John Gregurke

Unfortunately John Petheram was unable to lead the excursion. We hope that John will, later in the year be able to show all the extra sites that John La Gerche was involved with. (See note p.4 Ed.)



Walking through Oak Gully, La Gerche Trail. **Photo:** Ambika Bone

Thirteen people joined the walk around the La Gerche Trail to observe the newly erected signs. Funding for this project was provided through a *Local Landscape Enhancement Grant* from the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Information about the trail, La Gerche's work and plants growing in the area is on the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat website.

As we walked around the trail be looked at the labelled trees and shrubs. In the Oak Gully autumn leaves are beginning to colour and fall. Birds seen included White-browed Scrubwren, Red-browed Finch and Eastern Yellow Robin.

The picnic tables at Slaty Creek were a pleasant place for lunch but we were accompanied by many European Wasps.

Last stop for the day was at the proposed Shuttleworth Rd fuel reduction burn site. Preparation for the burn included a dozed break around the perimeter. Also the areas at the base of large messmate trees near the edges of the site to be burnt had been raked to prevent fire burning up the



Raked area at base of Messmate. **Photo:** John Gregurke

bark and igniting hollows in these trees.

John Gregurke

Mid-month Excursion - Surface Hill Historic Area

On Tues, 17 May visitors from Berringa walking group swelled our attendance to 24 for the excursion led by Emily. The purpose was to record the position and number of Bushy Clubmoss *Lycopodium deuterodensum* growing at Surface Hill.

The Surface Hill Hydraulic Gold Sluicing Pit was created by the sluicing activities to recover gold. Water for sluicing was delivered via water races from dams in Enfield Forest. Lower levels of the pit are now covered with stacks of water-worn quartz stones. It is in



Photo: Bushy Clubmoss *Lycopodium deuterodensum* growing at Surface Hill.

these stony areas that Bushy Clubmoss is growing. There were five areas of Bushy Clubmoss in which we counted 25-500 stems. The number of plants cannot be accurately determined because the plant has underground rhizomes with many aerial stems. Also growing among the rocks were Scrambling Coral-fern *Gleichenia microphylla* and Screw Fern *Lindsaea linearis*.

At this time of the year any flowers seen are of interest. We found Red-tip Greenhood *Pterostylis* sp. aff *1 parviflora*. Cranberry Heath *Astoloma humifusum*, Common Heath *Epacris impressa* with pink and white flowers and Golden Bush-pea with a cluster of a few yellow flowers. Also many orchid leaves were seen. The most exciting

find was Tongue Orchid leaves. A summer visit when the plants are flowering will confirm their presence.

Some of the group returned to Ballarat past the Boden water races which carried the water for Surface Hill sluicing from Enfield.

John Gregurke

Below is a photo of Clubmoss *Lycopodium deuterodensum* as in the late Pat Murphy's collection in the National Herbarium of Victoria
Photo: Susan Kruss



Footnote: Susan Kruss is doing her PhD thesis research on aspects of FNCB history. She has listed all 1123 of the botanical contributions of Pat Murphy's work to the National Herbarium of Victoria. Also she has been asked to write a story for their prestigious journal: "Muelleria" about the late FNCB member, Patricia Murphy and her extensive herbarium collection.

Editor

NB Changes for July excursion: 9.30am start, to La Gerche Forest Trail,
leader :John Petheram

Saturday 4 June Excursion

Fungi Foray: Sanatorium Lake Park, Mt Macedon

Usual arrangements for departure from Ballarat

Leader, Les Hanrahan to email more details before Fri. meeting

***Can't go on 4 June - then another fungi foray for you
at Blackwood***

Sunday 26th June -The FNCV Fungi Group foray.

Meet 10:15am in the Garden of St. Erth carpark, Simmons reef road,

Excerpts from FNCB Meeting May 6, 2016

Attendance: President John Gregurke welcomed 23 members and a visitor. Special welcome to newest member, Renee Winton.

Apologies: M Sorrell, B & K Elder, J Petheram, J Mildren, G Binns, P Billing, WMcGuire, J Metcalf & H Young-Harvey

Business Arising from Previous Meeting: Water for Victoria and Native Vegetation Permitted Clearing Regulations draft reviews. John G, Peter & Emily N participated in the workshop to discuss City of Ballarat's Biodiversity Action Plan. Application for threatened species grant funding not submitted, but information about local threatened species gathered so we are better prepared for the next grant opportunity.

Correspondence: **IN** From VNPA: their suggestions re. feedback for the review of the Native Vegetation Permitted Clearing Regulation; Environment Victoria: Update of their activities; positive news about the State Govt's response to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Enquiry; Bush Heritage Australia: link to online newsletter "Bush Tracks"; Helen Lewers, WHAM: update of activities & plans; link to Environment Justice Australia's briefing paper re. native vegetation clearing regulations review; ACNC Quarterly Newsletter; Lisa Kendal, Sustainable Development Australia: request that info'about an SDA art project to promote sustainable behaviours be distributed

From Susan Kruss: praise for our new "Orchids" page on the FNCB website, and a request for permission to use Pat Murphy's line drawings of orchids and related APS articles in her thesis; news that she had been asked to write a story for prestigious National Herbarium of Victoria journal: "Muelleria" about the late FNCB member, Patricia Murphy and her extensive herbarium collection.

From Sheriden Matthews: request for information on the Linton Block for a Uni. Project; Portland Field Naturalists' Club: letter of thanks for the donation of Helen Burgess' dried seaweed collection; SWIFFT, via Elspeth Swan: query about providing our Club logo for publishing on SWIFFT website to show our Club's support of program; Shaun Cunningham, Deakin Univ.: copy of his presentation at the Future Landscapes- Biodiversity Action Planning workshops.

OUT To Club Members: info' re. Sustainable Environment Arts Movement "WARM" art project; request for bird survey data any members might have re. Western Districts Lakes RAMSAR site;

Reports: Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$7,794.96 Income \$401.47 Expenses \$179 Closing balance: \$8,017.43

Future Landscapes Strategy: Biodiversity Action Planning Workshop: Three Club members attended, along with 27 other community group representatives. There was widespread agreement in the room about the major challenges facing biodiversity, with each person contributing one particularly issue significant in their eyes.

SWIFFT Video Conference: Three Club members heard about threatened species monitoring and management by local government, progress on the SWIFFT website and a brief overview of Victoria's draft biodiversity strategy currently out for public comment.

General Business

The Canadian Regional Park is to be officially opened soon. We will pass on more information as soon as it becomes available.

Emily will be giving a talk on orchids of Enfield Forest to the Napoleons-Enfield Landcare Group at their Club Meeting on May 25. All welcome: 7.30pm, Napoleons Hall, Colac-Ballarad Rd, Napoleons.

Australian Naturalists' Network Get-together in 2018 – For our consideration: could our Club put up its hand to be part of a group of Clubs in western Vic that organise it? A possibility is that it could cover Surf Coast, Volcanic Plains and Grampians.

Show and Tell

Indra spotted Royal Spoonbill, Eastern Great Egret, Blue-billed Duck, White-faced Heron and Black-tailed Native Hen at Lake Wendouree, a Little Eagle eating a Magpie at his property in Napoleons and a White-necked Heron at Buninyong, and he heard a Powerful Owl in Enfield Forest, Napoleons where he also saw a flock of about 10 Flame Robins.

Margaret reported a Raven family continuing to enjoy bathing in her birdbath at Nerrina, and Galahs feeding on her front nature-strip. Claire and Peter saw about 360 Long-billed Corellas feeding in a paddock at Bald Hills, with a smaller group grazing at Miner's Rest wetland.

Andy Arnold was involved in a four-night fauna survey at Wombat Forest, Yandoit and Hepburn Regional Park where the group recorded just one Brush-tailed Phascogale (significantly down on the 14 found in the same area last survey), Agile Antechinus and Sugar Gliders were recorded. He was also delighted to spot a Rakali in Fairyland at Lake Wendouree.

Steve spotted an Australian Ringneck Parrot at Allendale, an unusual sighting that was probably an aviary escapee. He also enjoyed the sight of two dozen pelicans at Green Lake on his trip back from Adelaide.

Paul shared the alarming records of 124mm evaporation and 25mm of rain at Mt Egerton in March, and 80mm of evaporation and 23mm of rain in April. A Ring-tail Possum is once again eating skin off his lemons and up to 19 kangaroos are regularly grazing at his property.

John G. saw an immature White-bellied Sea-Eagle at Lake Burrumbeet and 100 Little Ravens flocking near Cuthberts Rd.

Emily reported the second sighting of a Brown Songlark making its presence known in song and chat at her property in Scarsdale, and the second sighting of an echidna who spent an afternoon sleeping nestled into the back of a retaining wall around her house pad as she and Pete worked on the pad.

Carol noted a pair of Rainbow Lorikeets in the Liquidambar opposite her house in Ballarat, a more common sighting in Ballarat over the last 4 to 5 years. She was also pleased to report that her photos and story of Rakali was continuing to be shared through a high school student project supported by Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

Ann Get-together in Perth ,WA 1-10 Oct. 2016

Late bookings available until May 31

Final payments will be requested at the end of July when costs will be finalised.

CALENDAR 2016

June

- Fri 3 *Hollows as Habitat*: John Gregurke, club member
- Sat 4 *Exc. Fungi Mt Macedon*: Les Hanrahan, club member
- Tues 21 Committee meeting John Mildren's

July

- Fri 1 *Favourite moments in the field* . Club members' images
- *Sun 3 9.30am *La Gerche Forest Trail* excursion John Petheram, club member.

* Note changes of excursion listed in the syllabus

Committee

President	John Gregurke	
Vice Pres	Fran Hanrahan	
Secretary	Emily Noble	
Treasurer	Les Hanrahan	
Claire Dalman		Val Hocking
Peter Dalman		John Mildren
Bill Elder		Andy Arnold

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Tammie Cornford

Website: <http://fieldnatballarat.wordpress.com>

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr of Gillies and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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